

Bradbury Mercury  
1960s 16 Signal Regiment Reunion Club



Issue Number 36

Edited by Iain Haldane  
www.the-60s-16ers.com

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When we saw the story on the BBC about the Tower of London Remembers Poppies I immediately went on to the computer, found the site and ordered a Poppy. It arrived with two weeks of the exhibition closing. Below is an extract from the email I received on the 9th April 2015.

We are absolutely delighted to announce that the ceramic poppies from the installation *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* have all been sold.

To date over 860,000 poppies have been delivered to their new owners. We are making the final few UK deliveries over the next week, with all international deliveries expected to be completed by the end of April.

A project of this size and scale has been both rewarding and challenging. We are grateful for your patience while the poppies were being delivered.

Each of the service charity partners has received a staggering £1.2m and you can find out by following the web address at the end of this paragraph. How they are already using this money to help their causes. We anticipate that this figure will rise even further once we complete our accounts. <http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/poppies/about-the-charities>

The project officially came to a close on 10 April 2015 but further information and support, if required is available on the following links:

For product information about the ceramic poppies and work by Paul Cummins, contact Paul at:- [poppies@paulcumminsceramics.com](mailto:poppies@paulcumminsceramics.com)

For information about the Tower of London Remembers project, visit this page:- <http://www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon/poppies>

On behalf of the whole team and our charity partners we offer our heartfelt thanks for all your support.

**On Front Page:**

The Poppies from the Tower of London Remembers.

Editors Ramble.

Hi Folks, more rambling from Iain. Since the last issue Rita & I have had some great times. We jetted off to New York on February 9th. Went via Amsterdam, this was cheaper than flying BA from Glasgow. Had a delay though, sheet ice at JFK held up our landing till 16:30. Met by our son, we soon found out what 20<sup>o</sup>F felt like in a bitter cold windy day in New York. We only stayed for two days and flew to Las Vegas on the Wednesday morning. It was only 75<sup>o</sup>F in Vegas. Picked up our hire car and drove to the Mardi Gras Hotel and Casino. Looked a bit drab and my first thought was did I pick the wrong place. But after booking in and getting to know the very friendly staff we walked down to our room. It was only about 20 feet from the entrance to the swimming pool. The pool is located in the middle of the hotel courtyard. A veritable sun trap. The pool was cool and the Jacuzzi hot. We were there to watch the World Rugby Sevens which were taking place on the Friday through Sunday.

We met Wayne & Brenda Edwards on the Friday at the Sam Boyd Stadium and Dave Aldous made his entrance on the Sunday. The best day for the crowds was the 14th, Valentines Day. We had a fantastic time, bought my new hat which some of you may have seen if you are on Facebook. Met some lovely waitress's who actually posed with me for a photograph. Recommend Hooters and the Tilted Kilt for drinks and Burgers. Wayne suggested all 6 of us go for a meal on the Monday night. I suggested the Tilted Kilt and made a Recce on the Sunday. I emailed my findings to Wayne who promptly booked it in my name. This I did not find out till I was halfway down my first (or second) Sam Adams lager. We had a fantastic time if the photos are anything to go by. 4-6th March 2016 and the 12-13th March in Vancouver so Wayne is staying back home this time. We are still havoring, will wait and see where the son ends up, he is moving from New York, before we decide.

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## Our Chairperson's Letter

I am writing this during our hottest heat wave for more than 20 years, but by the time you read this it will probably be the rainy season again! Let us hope not.

Anne and Bill have done a sterling job in finalising the arrangements for the Reunion, and I have to say how impressed by have been by the cooperation of the hotel staff and their efforts to meet our requirements.

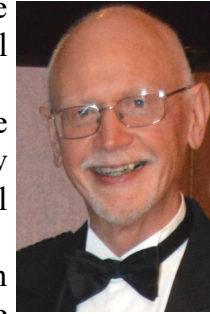
I attended the RSA Reunion weekend in Blandford in late June and it was good to see some of you there. There

was an excellent display by many units, with plenty of opportunity to talk to current serving members of the Corps. It gave me an excellent insight into what the Corps is doing today, and demonstrated the huge advance in the use of technology now being used – many of the changes into Star Wars territory. At a more basic level it was good to see the quality, enthusiasm, pride and intelligence of the present Corps members – reassuring to see that standards are still the same as in our day.

I am pleased to say that both Lieut-Col Stuart Whittley (and his wife Victoria), the current CO of 16 Signal regiment has accepted our invitation to attend the Gala Dinner and talk to us before the AGM about the current role of our old regiment. Also Caroline Addison (and her husband Doc) the membership secretary of the RSA has also accepted our invitation and will bring us up to date on the RSA on the Sunday morning. Nothing is too much trouble when asking Caroline for information on RSA and associated events.

In my last newsletter I mentioned the opportunity for a private visit to the Tower of London, but have had little response – if you think it would be a good idea please email me.

I look forward in seeing you all in October – I should be in a very happy mood as I will have retired on 30 September (dv) from my practice!



My very best wishes to you all

*Peter Crane*

## Humble Pie

Merseyside and the Northwest has a great deal to enthuse about. However recently Irene and yours truly visited York for a second time. On our 1<sup>st</sup> visit we were quite young and this Paddy was 100% *Philistine*. I completely missed the beauty and historical heritage of such an amazing City. I guess I'm saying; as good as Liverpool, Chester and Southport are, on this our 2<sup>nd</sup> visit; York knocks them into a cocked hat. The 100% must have reduced being as our three day visit was far too brief, which leads to the possibility of appen a reight tyke *or his lass* will provide a far better article of this fabulous City especially if they can remember that far back. From Celtic Britons, Romans, German Tribes, Vikings, Normans.

Giving that York, Bath and one or two other Cities have left good memories, there's bound to be other great places I.E.

More humble pie on its way.

*Paddy meself so it is.*

*Words of wisdom not required.*

*I'd rather be daft.*

*Paddy Conroy*



## The 60's-16ers Reunion Club

Can you believe it has been some 20 years since I received a telephone call from my friend Trevor Davies. Little did I know at the time it was a call that was to change my life (and my Liver). Trev said that he was digging out his passport and crossing the border to England. He had been contacted by Chris Bartlett from his old regiment and that a reunion was being organised in Southend. It was arranged that he would fly to Stanstead where I would pick him up and drive him down to Southend.

We arrived on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 1996, one of the sunniest of days of the year. We approached the town in the early afternoon, found "suitable" accommodation and proceeded to the Navel and Military Club. Following a quick pint I prepared to leave Trev to his weekend when Chris and a few others arrived. This was when everything changed because the next thing I remember was waking up in my hotel bed on Saturday morning knowing I had had a good night.

The following day as others started to arrive (totalling I believe some 30 plus) including one from Hong Kong and one from Canada. Many happy smiling faces were seen across the room as one by one photo albums came out bringing back some wonderful memories for those attending. In between the food and drink time was found to discuss "the good old days".

Saturday saw the inaugural meeting apparently held to decide where to go from here, the answer was an overwhelming cry - more of this please!

After an evening of eating drinking, enjoying the social and rekindled memories, all joined in Auld Lang Syne before retiring happy. Sunday saw the return journey home promising that next year would be bigger and better.

Here we are twenty years later and I would say that Chris, some 30 plus colleagues from that weekend and many more of you since have succeeded with that vow to make each year bigger and better, may it long continue.

Thank you for making me most welcome.

**Tom Watt**

Regarding John William Harper VC who is a relative of mine: I was invited over to Merksplas (Belgium) for the 70th Anniversary of the Liberation of their town, this in September 2014. Much to my delight and amazement a artiste of some repute from Belgium presented us (The Town of Hatfield) with a Stained Glass Window which depicts Harper's Valour. It took the artist, Mr Frans Pelgrims, two years to produce and demonstrates the esteem both he and his townfolk hold for John William Harper VC and his men.

The window comprises of 49 separate pieces of glass donating Harper's date and place of birth and also date and place of his death (the VC being awarded posthumously). It shows both the Victoria Cross and his Badge of the Yorks and Lancs either side of the Hatfield/Merksplas town flags. In addition scenes from the Victor comic which was printed front and back page of a issue brought out in the 1960s under the title "The Stubborn Tyke".

The artiste carried out all this work simply from a picture I left the townfolk with on a previous visit and from a copy of the Victor that I gave them. There are two pictures shown. The picture below was taken at the actual presentation with myself and the Artist to my immediate right. He amazingly is 82 years of age. The delight on my face only goes a little way to show how appreciative I am. The window now has a place in our village church of Hatfield which dates back to the 1000s AD. Hope our readers enjoy the window.

*Reme.*





John William Harper VC

## Harrogate Memories.

In June along with Sue, Hazel & Ted Hebden met up in Harrogate with Ann Aitken. For all that may remember, Ann was married to Mike (Taff) Aitken and not to be mistaken for Tex Aitken who was also in 2 Squadron Medium Radio Troop. Taff, like Ted and I was a T.G. Op.

Taff, an extremely likeable chap also had a quarter next to Sue and I in Am Geisterburg, Dusseldorf and we four spent many, many, wonderful evenings sharing a drink in our quarters and listening to records. Ann and Taff left the Army in 1970 and along with their two gorgeous girls, Sharon and Judy they went to make a new life for themselves in South Africa. Sadly Taff passed away in 1992 and Ann made the decision to stay along with the girls. Taff, I am sure will be known amongst the Harrogate apprentices as that is where he joined the Royal Signals and duly met Ann. Thanks to Ann's sister, Val, we were able to spend a lovely day with Ann. The more we talked the more memories came flooding back of the things we remembered from 45 years ago. Mind you, when it came to Harrogate and all the wonderful goings on and the brilliance that all the Apprentices brought to the table, YOURS TRULY, was left out of the conversation. Still Ted Hebden had a field day and his day was spent looking forward to meeting up with one or two of the many young ladies that had the privilege of being on his arm. Hazel, well she couldn't care less! In the evening we were joined by Bill White, Bev, Syd and Bridget Wilson, Lyn and Dave Aldous, and Moira and Bruce.



Reme, Ann, Ted, Sue, & Hazel

## The Trolley

We drive into the car park, my dear old Gran and me,  
To do her weekly shopping, then I'll take her out for tea.  
We get ourselves a trolley but have to swop it round,  
It's one of these with a wonky wheel, a mind of it's own I found.  
The first things we encounter are lots and lots of fruit,  
Old Grandma pokes and prods them, she doesn't give a hoot.  
She gets her apples, pears and grapes, bananas, cherries red  
She still has the melon she bought last week,  
It's still in the fridge she said.  
Next we get her leeks and sprouts, she says that's all she needs  
So we move onto the bakery, straight to the cakes she leads.  
My Gran is slim, about six stones, can eat like a builder bloke,  
But poor old me, I eat a cake, put on a pound—no joke.  
We trundle on she gets her needs, for bargains she is keen,  
Anything that's three for two, especially mint ice cream  
Eventually the trolley's full and to the car we go  
Into the boot goes Grandmas loot, then join the traffic's flow.  
We reach the cafe, have our tea, Grandma is feeling jolly,  
Another week before we see a supermarket trolley.

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## My Lady

I do not wish to tarry long when my loved one does appear.  
To kiss her lips, to hold her hand and help allay the fear,  
That we might be discovered, our forbidden love revealed  
These precious moments savoured, but our love remains unsealed.  
She is the wealthy daughter, of the Lord who owns this land,  
But I am just a ploughman, no chance to win the hand,  
Of this lovely maiden, my love for her so strong  
That I know well it cannot be, our situation makes it wrong.  
I saw her first that sunny day, at harvest I was tied.  
She wore a hat with shady brim, her beauty I espied.  
She saw my smile, her eyes downcast, her blush for all to see.  
She later found a chance to meet, her interest strong in me.  
We know quite soon, the time will come, when a suitor, rich, will call  
And my true love by duty bound must face what may befall.  
The moments shared at this sweet place, the time just flies away.  
How many years I face alone, it makes me sad to say.  
So bitter sweet our memories, will last as long as life,  
That I am seen of lowly birth, no chance to claim her for my wife.  
How we wish her mother, had been a kitchen maid,  
Instead of titled family, with priceless jewels displayed.  
We could have lived together, so happy with our life,  
With me, her ploughman husband, and she my darling wife.

*Maira Graham.*

## A Promise Kept

When our grand daughter Emily was around 9 years old she would visit us in the summer holidays and one of her favourite things was to sit in a leather arm chair in our living room. She loved this chair so much that we told her when she grew up and had a place of her own we promised she could have the chair. Now, 9 years later she has graduated High School, left home to continue her education and moved to Ottawa. It was now time to hand over the leather arm chair.

On May 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 we left our home on Vancouver Island BC with our Dodge Grand Caravan loaded with an old Raleigh ladies bike (that she also just loved), boxes of household items, our own luggage and yes, the chair. Our route would take us across the provinces of BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and most of Ontario almost to the Quebec border, a pretty long drive even by Canadian standards.

We drove through southern BC enjoying the scenery of forests, rivers, mountains and the wildlife. As we came into Alberta leaving the Rocky Mountains in our rear view mirror, stretched before us were the prairies of the next three provinces. The scenery changed dramatically into small hills, deep river gullies and vast fields of grazing cattle, wheat, oats, barley and all kinds of crops. Through Alberta and Saskatchewan along both sides of the highway we could see oil wells in the farmer's fields just steadily pumping oil into tanks. It must be nice to have your very own oil well in your back yard.

As the kilometers rolled by the scenery changed as we approached Northwest Ontario. Here we encountered an area of forests, lakes and rocky outcrops as we drove along the north side of Lake Superior. Now I knew that this was a big lake but I didn't realize that it would take a day and a half of steady driving just to get around to the East side of the lake. There are very few places along this highway that you could call communities so it is very important to fill up with gas (petrol) at every opportunity. Now Northern Ontario is renowned for bugs, mosquito's, black flies and other annoying insects. We thought we would find a nice rest area, have our picnic lunch and enjoy the scenery. It takes about 30 seconds for these annoying creatures to find you, land and start to feed on you. Rushing back to the van with our food and then killing the ones that had made it inside when we opened the doors we ate our lunch and drove on.

We arrived in Timmins 6 days after we had set off and enjoyed watching Emily perform in her last High School music performance. (Sonic

Democracy, look it up on You Tube, quite the production). We then left Timmins to have some vacation time of our own and visited family and friends in the Toronto area. Oh, I forgot to mention Timmins is an 8 hour drive from Toronto, just a short trip!

After our vacation time it was back to Timmins to attend Emily's High School Graduation ceremony. Now in Canada and the USA this is a big event with caps and gowns, speeches awards and scholarship presentations. (Probably very similar to your own school leaving event. Like my own, watch the door doesn't hit you in the \*\*\*\* on the way out and go get a job). It really as a very nice event and we enjoyed being there.

The day after graduation we loaded up Emily and her boyfriend Felix into the van and off we go to Ottawa to find an apartment. They are both attending college/university to further their education and careers. Now finding a place to live that is clean, affordable and in a safe location that is "Grandma approved" is quite a difficult task. However after two days of looking we found a place that they both liked and although small met the requirements. Now back to Timmins, yes another 8 hour drive but we overnighted on the way back, easy drive!! The van was reloaded with their "stuff" and yes the "chair" and the bike and Brenda and I go back to Ottawa. Once in Ottawa we move all their "stuff" into the apartment, buy and assemble some IKEA furniture and then drive back to stay with our son for a couple of days before heading home.

We decided to change our route home and drove back through the USA. This route took us along the South side of Lake Superior, very different scenery and a lot more people. The prairies look the same both sides of the border as we headed towards the setting sun and our home on the West Coast of BC.

This part of the trip took another 6 days and we stayed in some interesting little towns in the various states of Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho and Washington.

The total distance we drove was 14,576 kms. over a total time of 6 weeks. At the end of the journey we both agreed that it was a wonderful experience that we wouldn't have missed for the world. We saw our granddaughter move on into the next stage of her life from a child to a beautiful young woman and most importantly, **" A promise kept"**.

*Wayne & Brenda Edwards.*

## Water Sports.

In the beginning circa 1980 is myself ably assisted by fellow Granada workmates. We were the task force armed with bombs (balloons filled with water and flour). This photo shows us, the Granada guys in a raft (fun) race. The location is the River Dee at Chester. This of course was before Health and Safety. We would not



be allowed to ride over the weir nowadays.

These two of the photographs show the skills of the water genius. This is a Aquatic Jet Pack this guy is using.

Look here for more info:-

<http://aquaticjetpacks.com/>

They are based in Poole,  
Dorset.

Aquatic JetPacks  
Salterns Marina  
40 Salterns Way  
Poole  
Dorset  
BH14 8JR



Never the less last Sundays July 12th show left our old fashioned effort (as good as it was) very dated. There were more than 1000 spectators and dozens of rafts on a superb day all organised by Chester Rotary Club.



These three photos show that those rafters that were daft enough to aim their Mickey Mouse water pistols at him were rewarded 100 fold.

*Paddy Conroy*





On Easter Sunday 2015 Rita and I took a trip up to Ballachulish. We knew of a couple of fish and chip shops up there. From there we could go round the coast road to Oban or head north to Fort William. We set off much later than we normally do. So we had to take 15 minutes to get past the traffic lights on Loch Lomond. This is where they are widening the road and have been for about two years. Anyway we stopped off at the Green Welly Shop in Tyndrum for a loo break followed by coffee and cake. The road splits at Tyndrum left going to Oban and turning right you go up through the snow gate to Ballachulish and beyond. As I was driving Rita, had control of my camera. When we were approaching Loch Tulla I noticed that there were a lot of cars queuing ahead. As we got closer I realised that it was not a road hold up but that they were all parked at the side of the road. Trouble was they were mainly half way parked on the side. This was the reason. They had stopped to look at the view and all seemed to be taking photos with their Cell cameras. I could not stop as they were no more spaces at the side of the road to stop so Rita took about 20 photographs as we drove slowly past Loch Tulla. This was one of the best. You can see another on the back page.

## 60s 16ers - Durrant House Hotel Bideford

### Order of March for Reunion Weekend 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2015

#### 1. Friday

- a. Arrival on Friday afternoon – congregate in the Venetian Room (Ballroom) on arrival and the bar will be open here from **1330** to 1700 when it will close whilst the hotel staff get the room ready for the buffet dinner (and we get changed).
- b. Welcome Packs will be provided – to include,
  - i. This Order of March,
  - ii. Agenda
  - iii. Last year's AGM Minutes
  - iv. 2014/15 Accounts
  - v. and map of Bideford (*PAC has this and can copy it*) – anything else to include? *Rose will copy Agenda and Minutes, Peter can copy the rest – if Noreen is happy with that.*
- c. The memorabilia will be laid out here (Reunion photos etc and please bring raffle prizes here before **1400 hours on Saturday** (we have exclusive use of this room for Friday and Saturday).
- d. Note that house wine will be £12.50 per bottle for the whole weekend – and Carlsberg/Tetleys/Real Ale £3.20 and House Doubles £3.20
- e. Dinner will be a buffet served at **1900 hours**. There will be no organised entertainment on Friday evening.

#### 2. Saturday

- a. Breakfast is from **0830 hours to 0930 hours**. Gala Dinner choices should have been made by now.
- b. 1000 hours walkers to assemble in the foyer, to catch the bus into Bideford (2 minutes ride) for an “historic town walk” to end at a pub for lunch – no more than 2 miles and about an hour and a half to two hours, as people stroll and shop. Don't forget your bus pass.
- c. Ballroom bar will be open from **1830 hours**. There is a free glass of wine before dinner.
- d. Reunion Photo organised by Iain at **1850 hours sharp**. Can everyone make sure they are there by then, as it takes probably 20 minutes to get everyone in place.
- e. Gala Dinner will be at **1930 hours** followed by a disco. Official guests are:- Lieut-Col Stuart W Whittle, Commanding Officer 16 Signal Regiment and his wife Victoria, and Caroline Addison, RSA Membership Secretary and her husband Doc.

### 3. Sunday

- a. Breakfast will also commence at **0830 hours and end at 0930 hours**
- b. Please be in the Penthouse Suite on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor by 1100 hours.
- c. Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart Whittley will bring us up to date with what is happening in 16 Signal Regiment (by then relocated in Stafford).
- d. Caroline Addison will then bring us up to date on the Royal Signals Association and what it is doing now and in the near future.
- e. These short addresses will then be followed by the AGM.
- f. At the AGM there will be the Proposal “That the tenure of the posts of Treasurer and Secretary be increased from 2 years to 3 years”. Reason – that those in post finds it takes at least the first year to get into the job, and then you are getting ready to hand over. **Proposed by Hazel Hebden, and seconded by Noreen Dixon.**
- g. Also at this AGM the following posts are up for election – Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Names to Chairman before the meeting, please. Those put forward will have the opportunity to present their case if they so wish, and the successful persons will also have the opportunity to thank those electing them and set out their proposals for the job, again if they so wish. The out-going persons will also have the opportunity to speak.
- h. Future proposals for venues to be presented – it is important that these are communicated to the Chairman as early as possible before the Reunion so that the details can be posted on the website and members have time to rate the venues before the meeting. If there is a video presentation required we will need to let the hotel know, but if there is a charge for the projector Peter will bring his. *Need to give a date on the chat room for any proposals to be communicated to PAC and whether projector is required.*
- i. Sunday lunch is available at the special price of £10, but need to be booked by the end of July - names and cheques to Anne. It is a Carvery and will be served at **1230 hours**.
- j. There will be an afternoon river bank walk commencing at **1415 hours** – assemble in the foyer – no more than 2 to 3 hours gentle stroll.
- k. There will be a quiz commencing at **1430 hours** in the Venetian Room with **Dave Aldous**
- l. The fancy dress theme is Pirates/Naval: the ballroom bar will be open from **1800 hours** and the buffet will be from **1900 hours**. There will be a disco.

### 4. Monday

- a. Breakfast will be from **0830 hours to 0930 hours**.

## Sailing in Greece

Every 3 months in Saudi we used to get 3 weeks leave with air fares paid to the UK and once a year air fares paid to Beirut, but in 1967 the Lebanon was in civil war so we were allowed to choose a nearby alternative such as Cyprus or Greece. I decided to take a sailing holiday in Greece in November 1967. I had an interesting flight from Jeddah – along the Red Sea over Aquabar, Amman and the Dead Sea. From Beirut we flew over Rhodes and the beautiful Cyclades.

We arrived in Athens on time – but there were no messages waiting for me, so my advertisements for a sailing companion had been fruitless. My comment at the time –“It definitely looks like a touch of the Chichester’s!”

I took a taxi to the Royal Greek Yacht Club – of course old Modinos (the yacht charterer) wasn’t there – they telephoned him and he said he would be along in 45 minutes. In the meantime I eat some beautiful fairly small red fish and drank half a bottle of light Greek white wine.

Modinos arrived and after spending ten minutes walking backwards and forwards trying to decide whether to sign the contract, see the harbourmaster or check the boat, we signed the contract over a bottle of beer, saw the harbourmaster and checked the boat.

A “complete set of charts” turned out to be one chart, but otherwise it was normal Eastern Mediterranean charter conditions.

While inspecting the boat, old Modinos kept dropping his pipe out of his jacket pocket – I kept picking it up for him. Finally he dropped it whilst showing me how to operate the toilet – I let him pick it out himself.

I chartered a 25-foot steel Dutch yacht from Pyrhaeus. I had asked the charter company if they could provide a crew but the price they asked for an unskilled young Greek lad was exorbitant, so I sailed alone. The weather was gorgeous and I lashed the tiller and mainsail and let the boat sail itself to Hydra.

I was the only tourist yacht about and moored stern-on as was the custom. Soon after I arrived, a wedding was in progress at the harbour-side church. It was very colourful and the harbour-side was crowded with guests and well-wishers. The weather was stormy and the area was washed by heavy showers.

In the evening I walked along the harbour until I saw octopus grilling on a charcoal grill outside a cafe. Inside I was greeted by a table of Greek fishermen who beckoned me to join their table. We took it in turns to buy rounds of Ouzo and little plates of grilled octopus. We had a great evening, the only slight problem being that they spoke no English and I spoke no Greek.

About two o'clock the party broke up and I weaved my way back to the yacht. I made it to my bunk, but even the gentle rolling in the harbour was too much, and I just made it to the cockpit, before I was violently sick over the side. I could taste Ouzo and charcoaled octopus for days afterwards.

I spent a couple of days taking photographs - the bright pastel colours and the rain made attractive scenes.

I had intended to sail to the Cyclades from Hydra. On the way, the weather broke and so I turned North for the mainland. By this time it was dark. Suddenly I heard a dull booming ringing sound. The wind was behind me, so it was not easy to steer. I leant forward and switched on the saloon light. The sight literally took my breath away. The saloon was half filled with water, and the booming sound was the sound of the floor boards banging against the steel sides of the boat.

I tried the pump, but it soon became clogged. I grabbed a bucket and poured bucketfuls into the cockpit well, where it could run out. Because of the following wind, I could only do this for a couple of minutes before the boat was thrown sideways on and risked broaching, especially as it was so full of water and made of steel. Eventually I got the water down somewhat and was able to start looking for the leak. I soon found it - the inlet/outlet to the toilet. I had not closed this down properly earlier. The toilet was on the right-hand side of the boat, so when we were reaching towards the Cyclades, we were leaned over on the left side, keeping the outlet out of the water.

When we came into the shelter of the land, I took down the sails and started the engine. Lashing the tiller, I reduced the internal water level to the bilges, lit the lights and tried to interpret what the lights ahead meant. I did not have a chart for this part of the coast as I had not intended sailing here. Also, there was a lot of new harbour works, so probably local charts would have been out of date anyway. Approaching an unknown coast in the dark without a chart or Pilot, concentrated the mind wonderfully.

Three metres in front of the bows, I saw a swirl in the water. Pulling the tiller sharply towards me, I saw a large flat-topped mooring buoy slide by. It was at least 2 metres across and just level with the surface of the sea. If I had hit it, the bottom would have been ripped out of the boat, like a knife through butter.

A couple of hundred metres further on, a rock breakwater appeared right across my path. Towards my right, there was a floodlight, and I changed direction for this hoping it marked the entrance to a harbour. My clue had been a huge floodlit hotel on the cliffs way above me. I thought there must be some sort of shelter near such a large luxurious modern hotel. Luckily I was right. Suddenly the end of the breakwater came into sight. I slid round it, and gently motored along until I found a spot to tie up against the quay.

I was emotionally drained, and all I wanted to do was have a hot bath and sink into clean dry sheets. The inside of the boat was a soggy mess, everything covered in black oil from the bilges and books and papers were a sodden mess. I sorted out the pump and pumped the bilges dry. I spread out the papers and books to dry, grabbed a small hold-all and my wallet, and climbed the hill to the five-star hotel.

As is usual in hotels of this class, there was not a raised eyebrow as I was booked in and ordered a chicken salad and a bottle of white wine to be brought up to my room. The bathroom was in marble and onyx with gold-plated fittings. A thorough scrub, followed by a leisurely repast, and I was soon fast asleep in an enormous bed.

The following morning, I came down to breakfast to be met by the police with my passport. They were concerned about my possessions on the boat as I had left everything unlocked and had left my passport on the boat.

I spent a couple of days in the area and hired a car for these days. I then sailed the boat slowly back to Pyrrhaeus.

*Peter Crane*

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### How I Joined the Army – *Liz Gibb*

I had never planned to join the WRAC. My life had been mapped out for me by my mother. Have a good steady job and marry her best friends son, who just happen to live a few doors away. Nothing wrong with that! but it wasn't what I wanted.

Fate played it's part when I had to travel to Cardiff to do my entrance exam

for the civil service. I had the required O levels, so it was only a formality. For me it was exciting being in the big City as I had only travelled on my own to various towns in the Valley's. At lunchtime we were allowed out and opposite the exam centre was a recruiting centre. I went in and asked about the WRAC and the Sergeant promised to send me the information and as I was not yet 18, he explained that my mother would have to give her permission.

Travelling home, my mind was in a whirl! How to explain to my mother that I wished to go into the Army. Especially her being a very formidable lady. I did however make an ally in my uncle (mums brother), who convinced her that I would never be happy living in Fochriw. Funny how life turns out because I have gone full circle, in that, I have worked in a primary school in Fochriw for the past 14 years. Why return to my roots? Well that is another story!

Mother eventually signed the papers and I went to Lingfield for basic training. I admit I cried the first night for my mammy. However, I soon settled in when I met the other recruits and found that they were just as Green as myself. After getting our kit we were taken to M & S in Guildford to buy underwear and we were instructed it had to be white as black was banned. This in case it inflamed passion in the soldiers. Well my new bra's were 32AAA and I used to fill them up with toilet paper as I had bigger spots than boobs!

After a few weeks we were allowed to go to London for the day, being chaperoned, throughout by a very butch Corporal who was also our training NCO. At that time I didn't understand why she looked and sounded like Rocky Marciano (the boxer). However, we felt safe with her!

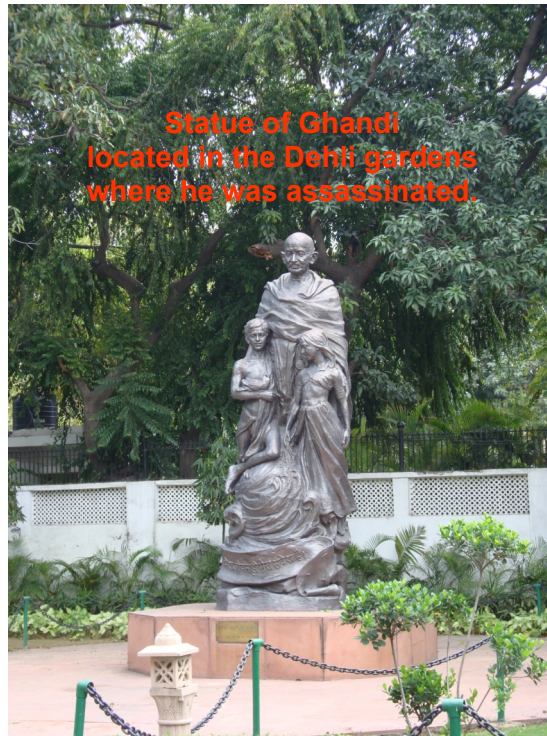
I eventually passed out after 6 weeks basic training and went home for a week. My Mother cried and thought I looked great in my uniform. Being small I believe the Army had been gracious enough to have it specially made for me at Mothercare.

Next part of my training was to Yeovil, in Somerset. It was a clerical course and I was there for 3 months. I always remember learning to type and as our classroom was next to the square, this where the girls were learning to drive, it was always nerve-racking, especially when you felt that they hadn't quite mastered braking. Anyway, after trade training completed, I had my first posting to the Royal Engineers depot in Chatham and assigned to work in the Education centre along with a wonderful man, namely, Major Grant. It was the start of two great years and I look upon it as the finest posting I ever had.

## India 2015

My eldest daughter, Karen and I decided to visit India. Our aims were twofold. First we wanted to see some of the country and gain an understanding of the people and the culture. Our second aim was to see if we could find where Dixie was born.

Many of you will know that Dixie was the second son of Reuben Alexander Dixon who retired as a Royal Signals Captain. Reuben (known as Al) met Verna Oldham in India where she was nursing and he had been posted. Obviously they fell in love and they married in India although she did keep him waiting for some years whilst she concentrated on her career. When the war broke out she was about to move to England to take up a place as Sister Tutor at Guys Hospital in London. Unable to travel, her career was on hold. So she finally agreed to get married and not surprisingly she never nursed again as she had three children in quick succession. Hyacinth, Allan and Dixie were born in India, later their fourth child Hilary was born in England.



Al's final posting in India was in New Delhi and the two boys were born there. The whole family moved back to England in 1948 when the British were unceremoniously sent packing. Verna had a sister, Win, who also nursed in India. She married another Englishman who worked on the Indian Railways and they did not leave India until 1950. One way and another Dixon family history covers much of India.

Personally I could never understand why none of them ever showed any inclination to return and see for themselves the changes that have ensued over the years. My daughter shared

my feelings and had the urge to see New Delhi so off we went over Easter this year.

We joined a Jules Verne tour which would start in New Delhi, travel what is known as the Golden Triangle to Agra and Jaipur. Just to spice it up a little we decided to go to Rathambore to join a tiger safari



through the Keoladeo National Park. Spicy it was not as over two days we saw one tiger so far away it could only be identified with a zoom lens!! We did however get very wet as whilst we were out on the second day the heavens opened (and I mean opened big time) and we survived by holding a dirty yellow tarpaulin over our heads. It covered the whole safari truck and goodness knows how the driver found his way.

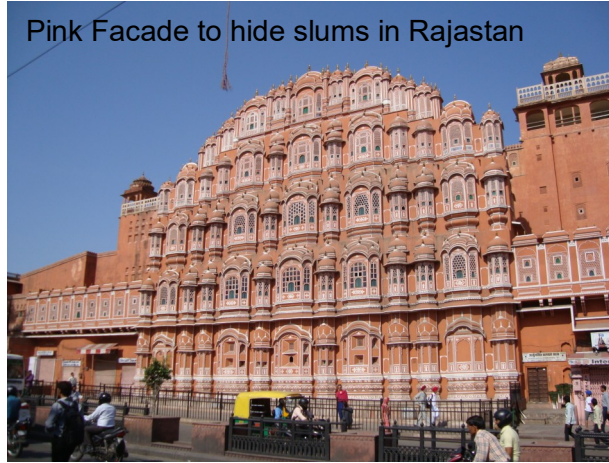
We visited amazing places like the Taj Mahal, the Baby Taj, the Amber Fort and the pink city of Rajasthan. I have included a few photos to prove it!! Karen took an early morning (5 AM) balloon ride over the Amber Fort and surrounds but as heights are not my thing I stayed in bed.

So on to the other reason to visit India to find Dixie birthplace. Arriving in New Delhi we thought we would start our search then, sadly our guide was less than helpful when we mentioned the British Military and on that first day we got nowhere.

Actually we did not have a lot to go on we knew the name of the hospital where he was born and the fact the family lived in Factory Road. Our final day in India we arrived back in New Delhi mid afternoon by which time we had decided we would just get a taxi and go for it. Once our guide realised we were determined, he arranged a taxi for us through our hotel. And thank goodness he did because the driver we got spoke English.

Driving to the hospital we actually passed the barracks which now house the 1<sup>st</sup> Indian Signals Regiment. It was very well protected and we were not allowed entry although we were assured had we made arrangements through our embassy before we left England we may have been allowed in. Not to be thwarted we continued to the hospital which was once a

Pink Facade to hide slums in Rajasthan



British Military Hospital but is now used by the whole community. To say it is run down and less than clean is an understatement, now somewhat larger than in 1945 it was pretty grim. Our taxi driver dropped us off so we could investigate and he went in search of Factory Road. We wandered around the hospital but could see nothing that suggested it might have been there in 1945. By now we were a source of great interest to everyone but could obtain no help as no one seemed to have any English and of course we had no Indian. We cut across the centre of the hospital to meet our taxi once again and came across a much older part of the hospital with long corridors and once white tiles up the walls. A large sign pointed to the Maternity Wing and I feel sure we were in the right vicinity.

Our taxi driver was very excited when he met us at the reception as he had



found Factory Road. Off we went with high hopes turning into a road two or three minutes away we found ourselves amongst flats, which was encouraging as the Dixon family had lived in a flat. A young man, who appeared to be in charge explained to us that the flats had been built in the year 2000 so this could not be it!!

He invited us in and we explained what we were looking for. Amazingly we found out that he knew the history of the area.

Apparently the area of Factory Road encompassed the entire British Military establishment in New Delhi and it stretched from beyond the barracks towards New Delhi centre and back beyond the hospital. It is hard to imagine but it must have been a huge area possibly some ten miles around.

Karen and I were satisfied; we found the hospital and gained some understanding of what it was like back in the days before the English left India for good.

*Noreen Dixon.*



## Life in the Sixteenth Century (1500's)

The next time you are washing your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things use to be. Here are some facts about the 1500'.

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide their body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "don't throw the baby out with the bath water".

Houses had thatched roofs, piled high with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and other small animals (mice and bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying "It's raining cats and dogs".

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence a bed with posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That's how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence the saying "dirt poor". The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery in the winter when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help keep their footing. As winter wore on, they added more thresh until when you opened the door, it would start slipping outside. A piece of wood was place in the entrance way, hence the saying "a thresh hold. (Getting quite an education, aren't you?).

In those old days, they cooked in the kitchen with a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and

then start over the next day. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while. Hence the rhyme “Pease pudding hot, Pease pudding cold, Pease pudding in the pot nine days old”.

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over they would hang up their bacon to show off. It was a sign of wealth that a man could “bring home the bacon”. They would cut off a little to share with guests and would all sit around and “chew the fat”.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with high acid content caused some of the lead to leach into the food causing “lead poisoning death”. This happened most often with tomatoes, so for the next 400 years or so, tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle and guests got the top, or the “upper crust”.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait to see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding “a wake”.

England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people so they would dig up coffins and take the bones to a bone-house and reuse the grave. When reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realised that they had been burying people alive. To prevent this from happening, they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell, therefore, someone could be “saved by the bell” or was considered to be “a dead ringer”.

That’s the truth .... Now whoever said history was boring?

Educate someone. Share these facts with a friend.

*Sheila Abbot*



© Rita E Haldane April 2015

This picture was taken by Rita Haldane from our car using my new camera on Easter Sunday 2015. It goes to show how good Scotland looks when Summer starts.

The words, comments and articles contained in this magazine are written by club members and are for the sole entertainment of club members and in no way reflects, the views or opinions, of the club generally or its officers.

**Any items for the February 2016 edition please submit by 31st December 2015**



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